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MINING RESEARCH LABORATORIES ADMINISTRATION SERVICES 1979-80

by
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September, 1980

ENERGY AND MINERAL RESEARCH PROGRAM
MINING RESEARCH LABORATORIES
REPORT ERP/MRP/MRL 80-100(TR)

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ABSTRACT

This is the third annual summary of the Mining Research Laboratories administrative services activities. As in previous years this report is not intended as an extensive review but rather is a brief general overview of the year's highlights. It is considered as a supplement to the Mining Research Laboratories Annual Progress Report 1979-80 (ERP/MRP/MRL 80-43(INT).

The period under review was a busy and somewhat unsettled year. No major changes were made, except in the area of reports production because of the implementation of word processing. However, a number of internal shuffles of duties, some permanent, some temporary, were made to compensate for changing work requirements, leaves of absence and staff changes.

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CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT	1
INTRODUCTION	1
OFFICE SERVICES	1
FINANCIAL SERVICES	3
MATERIEL MANAGEMENT	7
RECORDS MANAGEMENT	7
SAFETY AND SECURITY	9
TRAINING	9
TRAVEL	11
FACILITY CHANGES	11
CONCLUSIONS	12

TABLES

No.		
1.	MRL Office Services	2
2.	Courses taken by MRL personnel, 1979-80	9

FIGURES

No.		
1.	Minerals program spending, A.O. & M. and Capital	4
2.	Energy program spending, A.O. & M.	5
3.	Incremented energy program spending, A.O. & M. and Capital	6

INTRODUCTION

The fiscal year 1979-80 was a somewhat unsettled period for the administration services of the Mining Research Laboratories. Several people assumed acting positions to compensate for absences resulting from maternity leaves or resignations. In the wake of the implementation of word processing a reassignment of duties was introduced to provide a more equitable distribution of work, particulary for the secretarial and stenographic staff who would no longer be involved in report typing.

No major changes occurred in the financial or materiel management fields.

OFFICE SERVICES

Two employees took maternity leave in 1979-80 - the Chief's Secretary in Ottawa and the Office Manager at the Western Office. Instead of hiring a maternity leave replacement for headquarters, it was decided that it would be in the best interests of all concerned to have the clerk from CERL act as the Chief's Secretary while the Headquarters Stenographer assumed the admin. support duties at the Explosives Lab. This was done to provide a training experience for both employees and also maintain continuity within MRL. In the Western Office the stenographer took on the duties of the Office Manager in an acting capacity while a term employee carried out her duties.

The Elliot Lake Laboratory Officer Manager resigned in early fall after 12 years service. A competition was held to fill the position and the successful candidate was the Secretary from that lab. This, of course, created another vacancy which was filled by a new employee in March, 1980. Also at the Elliot Lake Lab, the Financial Clerk's status was changed from term to full-time continuing, and the Reports/Library Clerk was promoted from a CR2 to a CR3.

In late August delivery of the Wang word processor was finally effected. Because no member of the MRL staff wished to assume the position of a full-time operator, a competition was held. However, due to the staffing freeze, delays in obtaining clearance for staffing etc, the position was not filled until March. In the meantime other members of the admin. support group took advantage of the opportunity to learn to operate the word

processor and the machine was used for training and typing various reports, form letters, lists and other documents. The machine designated for Energy Research Laboratories work was installed in the fall and an operator hired early in January. There was insufficient time by the end of the period under review to properly evaluate the efficiency of the new technology, as new procedures were still in the experimental stage, but all indications point to a satisfactory improvement in report production.

As has been the custom at MRL for some time, several meetings of admin staff and management were held during the year. These dealt primarily with reassignment of duties to effect a more equitable distribution, particularly in light of the change to word processing for report work. The changes included the assumption of the Personnel work by the Chief's Secretary while the Special Services Officer took over the Contracts and Effort Distribution Reports. With less report typing to be done, lab secretaries were assigned the duties of recording leave and attendance for the individual labs, with the Chief's secretary maintaining the headquarters records. Lab secretaries/clerks were also requested to undertake more clerical duties relevant to procurement, coding and inventory control.

During the year MRL supported the EOW group by ensuring that a representative from the admin support group attended all meetings. As requested, management identified female employees with potential for advancement and encouraged career development endeavours.

Table 1 shows the distribution of secretaries, stenographers, clerks and word processor operator who make up the administrative support group of MRL. The Wang operator has been included although she is seconded to the Technology Information Division, because she is responsible for the production of MRL reports.

Table 1 - MRL Office Services

Laboratory	Secy's	Stenos	OCE	Clerk
Canadian Explosive Atmospheres Lab	1			
Canadian Explosives Research Lab				1
Elliot Lake Laboratory	1			3
Rock Mechanics Labcratory	1			
Western Office		1		1
Headquarters	1	1	1	2+1 (T)

*(T) = Term employee

(Figures as of March 31, 1980)

FINANCIAL SERVICES

The period under review was a quiet one for the financial services with no significant changes being made in the departmental financial reporting system and no major innovations in processing of accounts being introduced.

Changes in personnel, both temporary and permanent, led to signing authorities for the bank accounts in Elliot Lake and Calgary shifting back and forth to various people a number of times. However no serious problems arose as a result of this.

Graphs depicting capital and operating spending for the various MRL allotments are still being maintained. Figs. 1, 2 and 3 depict the forecast and actual expenditures for Minerals A O & M and Capital, Energy A O & M, and Energy Incremental A O & M and Capital, respectively for 1979-80. These graphs distinctly show the period of restraint in June, July and August when most spending was frozen. It is evident also that this caused a lack of correlation between the forecast and actual expenditures not only for the duration of the freeze but for the rest of the fiscal year; in many cases spending never did reach anticipated levels.

An internal budgetary control computer program to assist in day-to-day monitoring of project spending within the Mining Research Laboratories was implemented during the summer. After a period of trial and error, modifications to the system were made and eventually most of the bugs were removed. This program categorizes each item of expenditure according to project. It is therefore possible to see the exact amount spent on any one project. Such items as petty cash, travel, training, and centrally paid services are also included in the program so that an accurate picture of the true cost of a project can be obtained.

In keeping with this computer program a running list of contract expenditures by project is also maintained. The next step in the program is to incorporate the time expended on each project by monitoring and recording the effort distribution. This is now being introduced into the system.

MATERIEL MANAGEMENT

The physical count of office furniture and equipment was completed during 1979-80 but, because of a backlog of work at the Branch, was not committed to the computer nor were stickers issued so that the items could be tagged with the Branch inventory numbers. It is anticipated that this will be done in the near future.

The computer inventory program of laboratory and scientific equipment implemented in the fiscal year 1978-79 appeared to be working satisfactorily and is a great improvement over the previous card system which was subject to errors, omissions and duplications. New acquisitions were taken on inventory and the Branch supplied number stickers for all items purchased during the previous fiscal year.

A continuing review of equipment is being carried on at MRL and items are transferred to Crown Assets as soon as they are identified as surplus or obsolete.

RECORDS MANAGEMENT

In 1979-80 the Mining Research Laboratories produced 122 internal and CANMET Reports, 18 of these were presented at conferences or symposia and 14 were published externally. Approximately 13 contract reports were received for work involving MRL personnel as the Scientific Authority. There was a slight increase in the overall number of reports for this period, probably as a result of a more stable situation regarding management and research officers at the individual laboratories. It is anticipated that the improved report production capacity supplied by the Wang will result in higher productivity and increased volume in the coming year.

Requests for reports on an exchange of information basis, excluding those made to TID or referred to them for open file reports, averaged between 55-60 copies per month. They originated in Canada, the U.S. and overseas and many were referrals by our own research scientists or the CANMET Publications Officer.

A total of 42 mine safety certificates were issued by the Canadian Explosive Atmospheres Laboratory, including items designated as flameproof and intrinsically safe, fire resistant, and flameproof diesel. Certificates were issued after testing the equipment to ensure that it was suitable for use in Canadian underground mines. Explosion tests and gas detection tests performed by CEAL for the Canadian Standards Association numbered 50 during this period. Certification or test reports covering this work were prepared in each instance.

As part of CEAL's new quality assurance program, the list of certificates was updated and new equipment will be added when it is certified. To facilitate maintaining this list in a current status it has been put on the Wang machine and revised lists issued as and when required.

In September CEAL hosted a meeting of the International Electrotechnical Commission Technical Committee 31, along with two sub-committee meetings concerned with the prevention of explosions in explosive atmospheres. This week-long gathering attended by delegates from various countries throughout the world necessitated a concentrated effort on the part of MRL admin staff, particularly the CEAL Secretary, both in preparation for the meeting and in handling registration, preparing minutes of meetings in both offical languages, and undertaking sundry other duties.

The Canadian Explosives Research Laboratory, in the administration of the Canada Explosives Act, examined 2397 sample units of new explosives and pyrotechnic mixes. Reports of Properties were prepared and issued for each of these tests.

The revised "Guide to the Preparation of CANMET Publications" was finally distributed in late 1979. the use of the guidelines set out therein has been instrumental in standardizing report production both for work done on the Wang and reports produced on typewriters in the regional offices. Authors, too, have found the Guide most useful and their adherence to it simplifies the typists' job and eliminates the necessity for revising the text to make it conform to the guidelines.

Copies of surplus reports, in addition to those already sent, were requested by several universities and mining schools and the same were supplied to them for their use as training tools. Until the MRL supply of surplus copies has been depleted reports will continue to be sent out without charge. After that time any additional copies will have to be purchased through the TID open file system from Micromedia Limited.

SAFETY AND SECURITY

There were no problems regarding safety and security during the period under review. However, routine adherence to regulations and dissemination of information, were stressed in order that MRL could maintain the high level of safety and security now existing in all the laboratories.

During the year Ron Page, Branch Safety and Security Officer, in company with J. Robertson from departmental headquarters, visited the Elliot Lake Laboratory on several occasions. While there they conducted courses in Defensive Driving and First Aid for any employees interested in taking them. An inspection of the building and facilities was also made.

TRAINING

Table 2 is a list of courses taken by MRL employees during 1979-80 and demonstrates the diversity of disciplines and high level of interest exhibited by the staff. In keeping with the career development plans prepared for the admin support group, departmental, Public Service Commission and outside agency courses were attended and seats reserved for future participation.

To provide the staff at the Elliot Lake Laboratory with the opportunity to benefit from the departmental Letter Writing Course, George Morgan of the Human Resources Section was asked to conduct the course on site. He very kindly agreed to do so and a successful and well attended session was held.

At Bells Corners four members of the admin support group continued to take advantage of French training sessions given at MRL in an effort to improve their ability in conversational French.

Table 2 - Courses taken by MRL personnel, 1979-80

Name of course	No. attending
Career Development Program	1
Retirement Information Seminar	1
New Perspectives for Secretaries and Clerks	1

Name of course	No. attending
Attitude Assessment Seminar	1
SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Services	1
Technology Transfer Seminar on Coal Mine Ground Support Systems	1
Quality Control	1
Ph.D. Program (1st semester) Post Graduate Studies	1
Finance I and Organizational Behaviour (3 1/2 month course)	1
Applied Statistics & Managerial Accounting (3 1/2 month course)	1
Economic Principles	1
Intermediate Accounting	1
Cost Accounting	1
M. Sc. Thesis	1
First Aid Courses	7
First Air Courses - Revalidation	3
Defensive Driving Course	10
Quality Control in Canadian Standards	1
Data Processing for Non-DP Executives	2
Geological Factors in Underground Coal Mining	1
"Short Course" - The Genesis of Uranium Ores as a Guide to their Exploration	1
Total Time Management (Open Learning Systems)	1
Fortran Programming II	1
Geostatistical Ore Reserve Estimation	1
Construction Safety Course on Explosives	1
The Application of Vibration Measurement in Machine Maintenance	1

Name of course	No. attending
Project Management	1
Computerized Financial Reporting Systems	1
Letter Writing	8
Technical Writing (departmental)	1
Technical Writing (Open Learning System)	2
Problem Analysis for Decision Making (Open Learning System)	1
Effective Reading	1

TRAVEL

The only administrative travel in the period under review was a threefold trip to the Elliot Lake Laboratory by the Special Services Offier: to act as a board member for staffing the Financial Clerk position; to explain the project cost computer program and demonstrate how Elliot Lake Laboratory entries should be input or changed in the system; to advise re implementation of EMR filing system and disposal of old files.

Because of the constraints placed on spending, no immediate need for admin travel, and other unforeseen external factors, no other trips were taken by members of the Admin Support Group. It is anticipated that a number of trips will be made in the coming year by staff attending training courses, visiting the headquarters unit for orientation and for purposes of liaison.

FACILITY CHANGES

The only real facility change was in the headquarters area to accomodate the Wang machine operators. Two offices on the south-east corner of the building were put into use as word processing stations while the Reports Clerk and Admin Clerk moved into the outer office adjacent thereto. New carpets were installed to give the area a brighter atmosphere and to tone down the noise of the printers. To facilitate this move the Mining Information Officer and the Draftsman moved across the hall to the main office area.

Because of staffing constraints the term of the driver/warehouseman/storeman was not renewed and he left MRL employ at the end of September. As a result it was necessary to revert to the old system whereby individuals are responsible for ensuring that all necessary or urgent deliveries, pick-ups or other trips are made.

CONCLUSIONS

Despite the upheavals and changes brought about by maternity leaves and resignations, the administrative support services of MRL continued to function effectively and to adequately meet the challenge of new duties and job functions. As a result of rotation to meet internal short-term needs, the staff has benefitted from exposure to other areas of work and at the same time has acquired a greater depth of knowledge of the operations and objectives of the Laboratories.

During the year a representative from MRL attended most of the Equal Opportunities for Women meetings at the Branch and reported back to the group on the activities of the movement. The EOW adviser for EMR came to the Mining Research Laboratories Bells Corners Complex to explain the objectives and answer any questions concerning the program.

By the end of the fiscal year there were no admin support positions vacant and the word processing operator was also on staff. The transition from typewriters to word processor for reports production was smoothly effected with minor changes in procedure made from time to time to faciliate the operation and increase its efficiency.

No significant changes in financial procedures were made in 1979-80 and no problems arose in this area. The MRL computer program of project spending was implemented and modified as required to make it a viable tool for assessing the actual cost of a project, both in dollars and effort expended. It is anticipated that this will be useful to management in planning and evaluating projects and allocating resources.

With the physical count of laboratory and scientific equipment completed in 1978-79 and that of the office furniture in 1979-80, the coming year should be a quiet one in the area of materiel management. However, the period of respite from taking physical counts can be spent in verifying the computerized inventory lists, updating them and reviewing disposal and replacement requirements.

The area of records management should also be uneventful in the new year. Files have been converted to the departmental system and emphasis can now be placed on improving filing practices and records disposal schedules.

In 1979-80 reports management was streamlined in keeping with the switch to word processing, adherence to the new CANMET Guide and revamped procedures for reports handling. Requests for reports on an exchange of information basis continued at a steady pace despite the growing availability of copies from Micromedia. Contract reports also played a prominent role in MRL. The program to provide universities and mining schools with surplus copies of reports proved successful with a greater than expected response and many requests for additional copies.

Emphasis was placed on maintaining safety and security standards throughout the Laboratories during this fiscal year with many employees taking First Aid or other safety-related courses.

As evidenced by the list of courses taken by MRL personnel during 1979-80, a high level of interest in career development was displayed by people in all categories. Management supported the motivation displayed by employees by providing opportunities for aspiring workers to attend courses directly related to their area of work and this was supplemented in many cases by employees furthering their education on their own initiative.

Because this was a period of restricted government spending, admin travel was very light. It is hoped that the next fiscal year will see more travel between heqdquarters and regional offices to promote better rapport and stronger unity within the division.

Now that the offices have been rearranged to accommodate the word processing machines no major facility changes are anticipated in the near future. However, some refurbishing of carpets, conference room furniture etc, may be required.

In the fiscal year 1980-81 the administrative support services of the Mining Research Laboratories will continue to strive to maintain a cohesive, compatible and efficient unit which will provide quality support services to all areas of MRL.